2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1936) 1949
FL11 Luo FL11

LUO TRIBES AND CLANS

by

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In 1936 I had an opportunity, through the generosity of the Leverhulme Grants Committee, to spend a few weeks in Kenya. In the conditions then prevailing in that colony the Kenya Government considered it unwise for me to visit either the Masai or the Turkana, as had been my intention, so I decided that my time would be best employed in making a short survey of the Luo people, very little having been written about them and much of that of poor quality.[1]

Some six weeks were spent in Luoland. In view of the shortness of time at my disposal, made yet shorter by exceptionally severe fever, my enquiry was limited to certain features of Luo social organization. It was particularly directed towards a survey of political structure to discover how similar was Luo political structure to that of the Lango, Nuer, Anuak, and other Nilotic peoples. Some of the results of this survey are now recorded. They would have been published earlier had not the war prevented my giving any attention to anthropological studies. Statements made in this paper refer to 1936.

I had hoped that the Ven. Archdeacon W. E. Owen, who knew the Luo better than anyone has known them, would have read this article. The Archdeacon died in 1945. I am most grateful to him and to Mrs. Owen, for without their support I would certainly not have been able to make so rapid a survey. My thanks are also due to the many Luo who, largely out of regard for the Archdeacon and Mrs. Owen, assisted me in my enquiry.

The Luo of Kenya are a Nilotic people of some 500,000 souls bordering Lake Victoria Nyanza to the north and south of Kavirondo Gulf. Some outlying sections also stretch into Tanganyika. The parts of Luoland which lie back from the lake, e.g. Alego and Ugenya tribal areas, are undulating country in which the homesteads are built along the slopes (*thure*, sing. *thur*, also meaning 'home') of the successive ridges. The country near the lake is less broken. The rainfall is everywhere heavy and well-distributed. The people are mainly agricultural, though they keep

[1] C.W. Hobley, 'Kavirondo', *The Geographical Journal*, 1898; Sir Harry Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, Vol. II, Chap. XVIII, 1902; C. W. Hobley, 'Eastern Uganda', *Occasional Papers of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, No 1, 1902; G. A. S Northcote, 'The Nilotic Kavirondo', *J.R.A.I.* 1907; The Rev. N. Stam, 'The Religious Conceptions of the Kavirondo', *Anthropos*, 1910; C. M. Dobbs, 'Fishing in Kavirondo Gulf', *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.*, 1927; The Rev. H. Hartmann, 'Some Customs of the Luwo (or Nilotic Kavirondo) living in South Kavirondo', *Anthropos*, 1928; K. C. Shaw, 'Luo Marriage Customs' *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.* 1932; Archdeacon W. E. Owen, 'Food Production and kindred Matters amongst the Luo', *J.E.A.U.N.H.S.*, 1933.

papyrus fibre. Small rods made from a tree called Osire are used by children. A dried piece of minosa stalk is used as a float. Nyoninc, Nikire, Ongo, and Sire are caught in this way. The bait used is Cucumber or a piece of groundnut. Long lines, Mugundo, with a large number of hooks are sometimes used. These are left in the water for some time with floats at intervals to buoy them up. 226 227

Fish used for Local Consumption.

As most of the fish caught by natives is not eaten fresh, but dried, the whole of the population of these locations could easily eat fish caught on the Lake shore. In fact there is no doubt that dried fish is transported and eaten by the natives very much further inland than these Lake shore locations. The whole Jaluo population of Central and South Kavirondo will eat fish if they can get it. The population is approximately as follows:— 251 262

Central Kavirondo	216,000
South Kavirondo (Luo)	180,307

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The two Districts which border on the Lake shore in Nyanza Province are Central and South Kavirondo. The natives living close to the shore in both these Districts spend a large part of their time fishing. It has been estimated that about two to three thousand in each District are more or less permanently employed in this work. They use canoes (Dhoni, Tipi) made of rough boards sewn together with grass fibre and caulked with mud. There are probably about 1,000 canoes in each District (Central and South Kavirondo). They are propelled with single bladed paddles (Ngai). 226

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The following are the names and population of the Locations in these two Districts which actually border on the Lake shore from the Sio River on the Uganda border on the North of the Gulf to Mohuru on the Tanganyika border on the South side:— 341

Central Kavirondo.

Name of Location.	Population.
Samia	20,000
Kadimo	6,000
Sakwa	13,000
Uyoma	10,000
Asembo	18,000
Seme	26,000
Kisumu	14,000
West Kano	19,000
Nyakach	22,000
	182,000

19: Southall E-9 (1946-1947) 1952 FL11 Luo FL11

LINEAGE FORMATION AMONG THE LUO

I. THE SETTING

The Luo people constitute the third largest tribal unit in eastern Africa, and are by far the largest of the Nilotic-speaking peoples, numbering, by 1948 estimates, some 800,000 individuals. They are entirely contained within the three Kavirondo Districts of the Nyanza Province of Kenya except for some thousands who have now crossed the southern border into the Musoma District of the Lake Province of Tanganyika.

In terms of racial distribution the Luo are the spearhead of the great southward thrust of the Nilotic peoples from the Sudan, and of this spearhead the Luo of South Kavirondo and Tanganyika are the tip. The nearest Nilotic neighbours of the Luo are the Padhola of the Eastern Province of Uganda, whose territory comes within a few miles of the northern Luo boundary; but linguistically their nearest relatives are the Alur who now live 300 miles away, partly in the south-western corner of the West Nile District of Uganda and partly over the border in the Belgian Congo. In geographical terms the Luo occupy the coastal plains which border Kavirondo Gulf and the open expanse of Lake Victoria for fifty miles or so on either side of the entrance to the gulf, and also the foothills and uplands to which these plains give way a few miles inland. Although their territory forms a continuous block all round the gulf, it bears no correspondence to the boundaries of the North, Central, and South Kavirondo Districts, but within each of these consists respectively of 1 out of 13, 14 out of 15, and 19 out of 30 locations.[1] These locations form the territory of lineages or groups of lineages.[2]

II. PRELIMINARY ARGUMENT

The purpose of this article is to demonstrate certain aspects of the theoretical relationship of lineage to family; to demonstrate and interpret the structural importance of females in a system based on strict patrilineal descent; to show the divergence between norm and practice in Luo lineage concepts and Luo lineage activities; and to explain the process by which new lineages of different types are formed by reference to current or recent examples.[3]

If formally questioned on the point, Luo would admit that the members of a lineage are all the agnatic descendants of its founding ancestor, both male and female, living and dead. However, as Mayer remarks (see *The Lineage Principle in Gusii Society*, I.A.I. Memorandum XXIV, p. 7), 'it is no straightforward matter to define the lineage allegiance of women', and the operative members of a lineage in its observable activities are not those who would have to be included in it according to a strict

[1] The word 'location' is in Kenya applied to the successful subdivisions of administrative districts and bears quite different connotations from that with which it is used in the Union of South Africa and elsewhere.

[2] See Evans-Pritchard, 'Luo Tribes and Clans', *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, No. VII, where these groups are described.

[3] For notes, see next page.

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21:Huxley Q.T-5 (no date) 1960 FL.11 Lao FL11

resistance to the forward march of Progress in the agricultural field. No spontaneous wish for any branch of Progress except the political seems to have gripped the collective Lao mind. Here, on these hot and epithetic lateritoid flats, all the impetus has come from Europeans.

It might be argued that the Government has no call to make people change their ways against their will. This indeed is an argument much used by Lao politicians. It is an old story: should nanny sit by and watch Master Robert break up his toys—in this case, ruin the soil, create acute erosion, turn the whole of Nyanza province, which contains one-third of Kenya's population, into a great rural slum?

Beyond question, that was going on. In Nyanza province there are over two million cattle, about one to every two acres. It would be a job to support this rate of stocking on the finest pastures under skilled management; here it is utterly impossible. The cattle have become so small and shrivelled that they are really not much larger than Great Danes, but their sharp hoofs can still make and deepen gullies as they track a way to springs. During the last three years, the output of crops in the province has halved, because yields have dropped so sharply. Yet there are more and more mouths to feed.

All the evils of land abuse were here displayed in concentrated form. No manure, no rotations, no resting land under grass; maize or cotton again and again, planted too late and in the wrong manner; no trees, communal grazing destroyed by useless skinny little beasts. It was not for want of trying by the technical staff. For years they had been urging, persuading, bullying, demonstrating, and they had scarcely detected Lao indifference and complacency. Famine was beginning to threaten these overcrowded areas—for the one thing the people continued to produce more and more of was their own kind.

II

And so the Government decided that the only salvation for the Luo lay in dividing their communally owned land into individual holdings. Land consolidation—the first stage